

Contributions

AN APPRECIATION

B. C. MOOMAW

Post-mortem eulogies are usually but a feeble attempt to atone for past ingratitude and neglect. I will not wait until the author of Holsinger's History passes away to say a kind word, well deserved indeed, and which will doubtless come from many lips and pens when the record of his life shall belong alone to history. Among the many able and sincere men which the rich soil of Tunker virtue gave to a vanishing generation, H. R. Holsinger occupies a pre-eminence so distinctive and peculiar, wields an influence so profound and far reaching, occupies a position so large and commanding, that the perspective of time, in which the smaller man so soon disappears, will hold him undiminished in full view of succeeding and far off generations. This is not flattery, but truth. He is as much the reformer and liberator of the Conservatives as the Progressives. To the whole Tunker church he has been the angel of a new resurrection. He has made possible an expansion which before was impossible. All the new and expanding evangelical energies of the church received from him their first impulse. It was his hand which under Providence began to guide that most vital, most perilous transition, from the child age of the church to adult maturity and sanity, a transition which is yet in progress. Perhaps he does not comprehend the full extent of his work. No one can. Perhaps he is not self-conscious of his great instrumentality as a reformer. Reformers are seldom self-conscious of their mission. They usually struggle against it. Their instrumentality is more often involuntary than otherwise. Often they exert their utmost power to thwart the very work to which God has called them. Seldom are they acknowledged as reformers by those to whom they are sent. More often are they rejected, cast out as evil. Much of all this was true of the subject of our sketch. Certainly the Conservative brethren do not acknowledge him as the reformer of their church polity. But it is nevertheless true, and will be increasingly true of the coming years, until the day comes, as it will come, when they will acknowledge it, not in this generation certainly, perhaps not in the next, but in a day that is coming.

Naturally all the events of the Holsinger epoch were indelibly photographed upon his mind. He has transferred that photograph to paper in his "History of the Tunkers and the Brethren church." That work is simply a photograph, nothing more. But that is enough. The Brumbaugh history deals with the early records of the church in a literary and scientific manner which the Holsinger work does not attempt. It is a work of art, a monument of sound, discriminating judgment. But it stops short of the most significant, most vital epoch of the

church. That is beyond question the fatal defect of the Brumbaugh history, a defect from which it will not be able to recover. Because now the chief actor in the drama has set his hand on the records, and the result is a photograph of those stirring, significant times, in which he bore a central part. He has effectually forestalled all other historical efforts dealing with those events. No one else received such impressions as he received. No one else possesses the original and authoritative records that he possesses. He had absolutely all the material there was, and he has used it all, leaving nothing to his rivals or his successors.

The time will come when we will wish that we had appreciated his work more than we have done. It will discharge a little, a very little, of our debt to him if we buy his history so that his income from it will far exceed the cost of publication. That is the very least that gratitude and conscience should constrain us to do. It would cheer his old age and lighten his tribulations as nothing else. It would solace the declining days of a venerable and beloved servant of God, to whom the happy thousands of the Brethren church owe more than they will ever be able to pay. Pay thou this very hour a little of that debt. Act now. Tomorrow may be forever too late. If I have touched your heart, ere it hardens again let it put in his hand a token of your love.

DEFENDING OUR DOCTRINES

PERRY A. CLAPPER

I do not like to assume the role of a critic, but it has always seemed to me that the occasion of the Lord's Supper is an ill-chosen time for an exposition of our belief concerning it and the accompanying ordinances. I do not know whether or not this is a regular practice thruout the brotherhood, but, in my recollection, I have never attended a communion service in which it has not been a permanent feature. There may not be a half dozen in the entire church who share my feelings on this point, but, if I would speak the whole truth, I must confess that the inappropriateness of this practice has annoyed me, even to the extent of preventing my entering into the true spirit of the service.

I do not contend that our doctrines should not be preached. I believe that they should be expounded to the public, that new converts especially should be carefully instructed, and that even the older members need frequently to be taught the significance of the ordinances as we practice them. Yet, I cannot believe that the communion service is the time for doing this.

The exposition of the doctrines nearly always takes the form of a defense or an argument. For, tho only the one side is being presented, there is the consciousness that there are those present who take an opposite view. This tends to arouse in one feelings foreign to the spirit that should possess one while he is participating in these sacred rites.

The occasion of the Lord's Supper is a time for meditation, not for being wrought up over differences of opinion.

Then, too, this explanation each time that we hold a communion service looks to me like an attempt at justification. It seems to pre-suppose that our practices need an explanation. Are we not firm enough in our belief in these ordinances to observe them without each time accompanying their observance with a defense? As we stoop to the lowly service of washing a brother's or a sister's feet, is it necessary that we have the pastor to stand up and defend us in the act? Surely, the spirit of justification and the humility which this ordinance would teach can not exist in the heart at the same time.

Now, I would not be understood to think that the minister in charge of the service should say nothing. But, would it not be better if, as the service progresses, he would, in a few well chosen words, lead our minds into proper channels of meditation, thus making us feel the true significance of the rites in which we are participating,—directing our thoughts to the things symbolized rather than to the fact that we are the only whole gospel people? Then the service would surely be more nearly what Christ intended it should be,—a real communion, unmarred by an attempt to show that we as a people are more obedient than others to the commands of the Master.

MY FAVORITE NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLE

Romans

MRS. CLARA W. MILLER

Perhaps it is because I have lately studied this matchless epistle and have read it carefully in the Greek, noting the fine shades of meaning usually lost in translating, that I have chosen it as a favourite. Truly no Christian can have read it for the first time without feeling that he was introduced to heights and depths of Christianity of which he had never been conscious before. "The truths unfolded read like ideal verities, yet they embody themselves in the active controversies of earth." It is the ripened fruit of the thought and struggles of the eventful years by which it had been preceded. It was written by one whose heroism the world can not help but admire. Paul was ready to preach the gospel at Rome, the proud mistress of the world, with all her associations of idolatry and worldly power. The shame of the cross did not dismay him. The more men scorned it the more he gloried in it. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." The degree in which the spirit that animated Paul is possessed by us will measure our fitness for Christ's service. Blessings on our soul and the smile of God on all our work will be sure to follow.

The theme of the book is found in Ch. 1: 16, 17—Righteousness is attained not by man's work, but by God's gift, thru faith.